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ABSTRACT

This paper presents findings of a study that examined the views of Illinois female superintendents toward the superintendent-selection process. A survey mailed to all (N=83) women superintendents in Illinois elicited 47 responses, a 57 percent response rate. Findings indicate that women superintendents in smaller school districts received salaries not commensurate with those in surrounding districts. Approximately one-half of the respondents headed districts with fewer than 1,000 students. Factors in attaining the position included district knowledge, experience, and job skills. Barriers included experience and gender. The majority of the respondents began their career tracks into the superintendency at a late age; had prepared themselves for administrative positions throughout their education; were willing to move to attain the position; and lacked mentors. Search groups and those involved in the selection process should consider strong educational background and years of service as adequate preparation for the superintendency; understand women's leadership styles; promote women candidates throughout the duration of the search process; and pay commensurate salaries to male and female superintendents. Five figures are included. (LMI)

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ED 381 855

WOMEN SUPERINTENDENTS

of

ILLINOIS

Presented at AASA Convention
New Orleans, 1995

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EA 026 631

Women Superintendents of Illinois

Presented by
Martha E. Angulo, PhD., Strategic Studies
AASA Convention, New Orleans
February 10, 1995

Introduction

In preparation for a presentation at the AASA Convention, February 10-13, 1995, Strategic Studies of Park Ridge, Illinois surveyed all women superintendents in Illinois. Of the eighty three (83) surveyed, forty seven (47) responded (57%).

The purpose of the survey was to collect information regarding the women's viewpoint in the selection process for the superintendency. The findings furnish data solely for Illinois, however, the information may prove helpful to those in other states. Over the last years the number of women in Illinois has increased while the number of school districts has decreased.

Development and Administration of the Survey

Strategic Studies asked four women superintendents to collaborate in the development of a questionnaire. A draft of the questionnaire was given to the superintendents. Their comments, additions and suggestions were used in the preparation of the final version of the questionnaire.

Questionnaire Control

The brief questionnaire consisted of questions which asked respondents to provide specific information in their answers. Topics include the search process, personal information and perceptions about seeking the superintendency.

Survey Administration

Eighty three surveys were sent by mail during the last week of December 1994. Forty seven were returned.

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Data Analysis

For purposes of analysis, questions were tabulated by grouping possible responses. This provided a method for quantifying the information. Written responses were compiled and analyzed using content analysis. A summary of these responses is included in the Appendix.

Findings

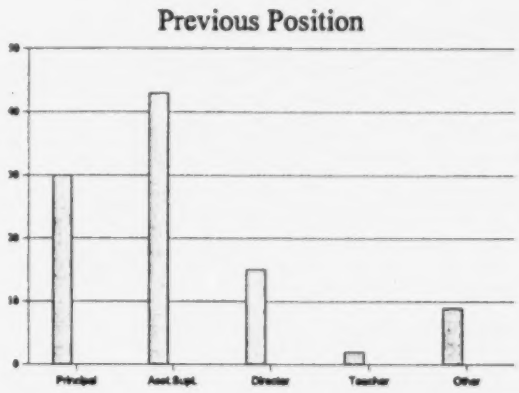
Survey findings are presented in sections reflecting topics on the questionnaire. A complete set of tables showing the percentage of responses is provided in the Appendix.

Demographic Information

All but two of the respondents are presently superintendents in Illinois. Two were superintendents until the current school year. Forty two percent of respondents are superintendents in the greater Chicago area. The remaining have positions in mainly rural areas.

Responses indicate that women tend to be new to the superintendency. Sixty eight percent of the women have been in the superintendency no longer than three years. Eighty four percent are in their first superintendency.

Most women (68%) began their first superintendency between the ages of 41 through 50. Seven of ten women have their doctorate degree. The women responded that they were most often Assistant Superintendents before becoming superintendents. Qualifications and experience were most often given as factors in getting the position.

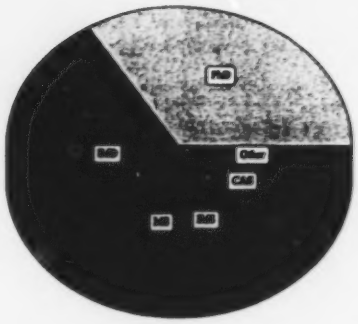


Moving was required of fifty five percent (55%) of the respondents in getting their positions. Of those twenty seven (27%) percent moved to Illinois from another state. Only four percent of the respondents had retired from another state before coming to Illinois.

Thirty two percent of those who are married have spouses related to education. One half of these are married to superintendents. Mentors, knowing those in the areas, and local references were listed as factors in getting the position One woman reported, "I was asked

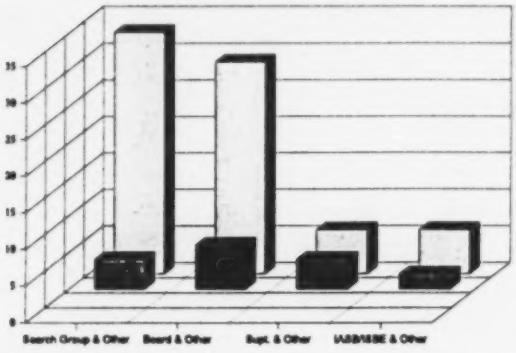
by the Board to be the next Superintendent. I never applied. What a way to do it. I have been asked to apply in other districts but have not done so." Another said, "I had several mentors who encouraged me, provided me with superintendency experiences before the job became available."

Education



Search Process

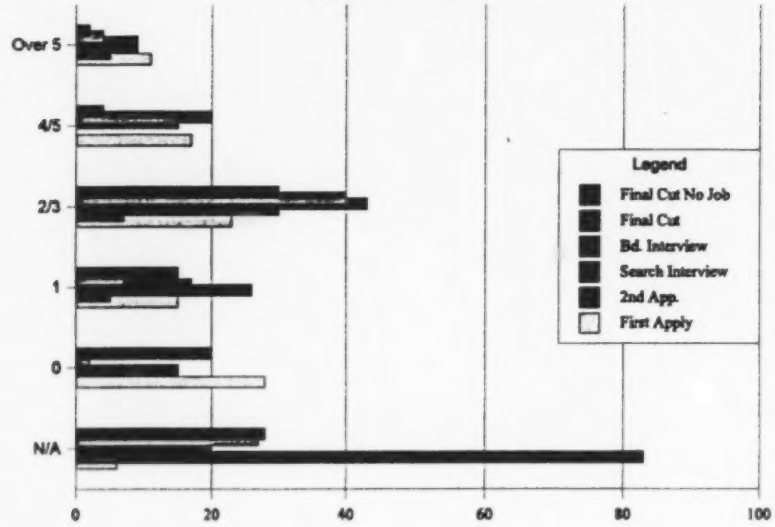
Getting the Position



Search groups and Boards of Education are most often to have been involved in women getting a superintendent position. The women reported that they had much influence on their selection. Over fifty percent of the women applied for more than one position before being selected. Five of the respondents went through the application process more than five times before being selected. Working in the district and being at the right place at the right time was listed by ten respondents as factors.

As reported by one respondent, "I have no question that my being female influenced some boards, at least four, I think, sometimes it was a concern about finance; once I believe it was because the district was a high school district; in one case a board member actually said, 'They're not used to women around here. How will you be able to inspire their confidence?' I believe in one case my being female caused or exacerbated negative union relations."

Applications



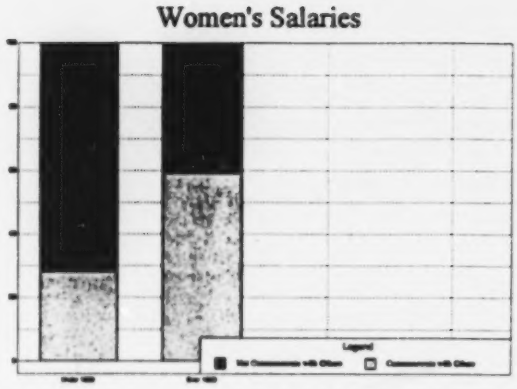
Thirty nine percent of the women have made the final cut in the selection process without being chosen. Fifty four percent were asked by a search group to apply for a position; of those, twenty six percent were not extended an interview. Twenty percent of the women have tried unsuccessfully to get another superintendency. Lack of experience (25%) and gender (14%) were listed, most often, as factors in not getting a position.

One women wrote, "My view is that the search firms are pretty pro-active in bringing women into the search process. Bottom line, however, that I sense there is still a hesitancy for local school boards to "take a risk" and hire a woman. My guess is that proportionately, more women get into semifinals than men, but that more men dominate the finals and the final selection."

Women are willing to be mobile in pursuing the superintendency. Of those responding to the survey, seventy nine percent (79%) were willing to move in order to get their positions. A respondent stated, "I found many more opportunities for advancement in Illinois since there are numerous small districts."

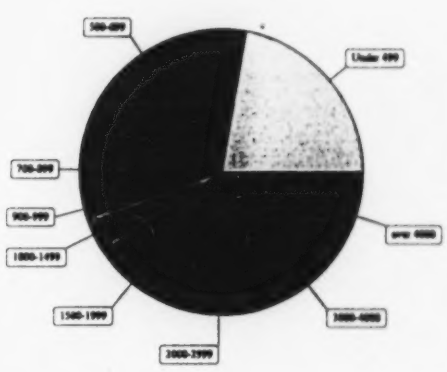
Salaries

One respondent stated, "Women are paid less than male administrators." The survey results neither agree nor disagree with the position. The women were split down the middle in their response to this query. Fifty one percent (51%) indicated their salary is commensurate with others in the area; forty nine percent (49%) responded no to the question. Of those in the greater Chicago area sixty one (61%) thought their salary to be commensurate with others in the area; of the others in the state, sixty one percent (61%) thought their salary was lower than those around them. When the data was compared by district size those in smaller districts received salaries not commensurate with those in surrounding districts. (See graph above.)



Size of Districts

About one half of the women lead districts less than 1000 students. Fifty three percent reported smaller districts while forty seven percent have districts of more than 1000 students.



Conclusions

While Illinois has made progress in the last year or so, it remains difficult for women to break through the ranks into the superintendency. Many of those who hold the position now have struggled to get the position. The questionnaire helped place focus on what we may already know, but should be repeated, for those searching for a superintendent.

- Women begin their career track into the superintendency at a late age.
- Women have prepared themselves for administrative positions through education.
- Most women are willing to move in order to get the position.
- Most women lack mentors and those who help "position" them for a superintendency.
- Search groups remain the most important avenue for women seeking the superintendency.
- Consider strong educational background and years of service as adequate preparation for the superintendency.
- Inservice Boards of Education and others in the selection process on women's leadership styles.
- Promote women candidates from the beginning to the end of a search process.
- Women deserve to be paid at the same salary level as men and they may need help from the search group to get it.

WOMEN SUPERINTENDENTS

of

ILLINOIS

Addendum

Presented at AASA Convention
New Orleans, 1995

Prepared By
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Greatest Factors in Getting Position

District Knowledge.....

- Former Superintendent left unexpectedly (personal leave), filled interim and remained
- Working in the district
- Knowledge of district
- Current employment with district
- Five years as principal in the district
- Former superintendent liked me and recommended my employment
- Right place at right time with right background and skills
- Being acting superintendent
- Success as principal
- Communication, proven record in district
- People in area knew me

Experience.....

- Educational experience
- Past experience
- Experience and people skills
- Experience in key areas and availability
- Experience in similar district
- Knowledge of finances
- Interview and reference information
- Knowledge of curriculum
- Qualifications and on site visit

Skills.....

- Strong leadership with interpersonal skills
- Enthusiasm and match with Board's vision of leader
- Competence
- Interview skill and knowledge
- Board desire for an educational leader with ideas and enthusiasm
- Track record, recommendations

Other.....

- Willing to move for same pay
- Networking
- Mentor
- Moving to area
- Few other applicants
- Board chemistry
- Match for position
- References
- Positive responses to and from Board, administrators and teachers
- Good match
- Who I am
- Few applicants
- Greater support of Board, staff, parents than other candidate
- Rapport with Board
- Consultant support

Factors in Not Getting the Position

Experience.....

- Lack of experience (6)
- Experience from a small school
- Elementary district limiting experience, district too small, my pay is too high, etc.
- Perception that I didn't have finance background
- Finance experience
- Competition with inside candidate, candidate with more experience

Gender.....

- Board stated they wanted a man
- Not granted an interview because the Board did not want a woman
- Female (4)

Other.....

- Not a good match
- Politics
- Other person preferred
- Insiders were selected
- Bad taste of the Board

Characteristics for Success

Personality.....

- Strong interpersonal skills (2)
- Patience
- Openness-people skills (4)
- Trustworthy, respected, great teacher
- Competence (2)
- Dedication
- Tenacity
- Sense of humor
- Perseverance, hard work ethic, dealing with people, self confidence
- Integrity, both personal and professional
- Honesty - follow through
- Energy
- High energy, outgoing, creative
- Positive attitude; a belief in potential excellence; willingness to work.
- Flexibility
- Enthusiasm
- Confidence #1, enthusiasm, energy, openness
- Personality, charisma

Work Habits.....

- Ability to work and coordinate staff - work with people
- Work long hours
- Organized and thorough
- Willing to work hard and a person who is honest and willing to give 100%
- Attention to detail and personal needs of staff; also, collaborative leadership style
- Workaholic(2)

Skills.....

Ability to motivate people to meet high expectations
Ability to listen(2)
People skills(3), knowledge base
Communication(3), public relations, honesty, high degree of demonstrated professionalism
Ability to get along and communicate with people (2)
Ability to communicate well
Varied experiences as teacher, administrator, principal; knowledge of business finance

Other.....

Quick Study
Good Board superintendent relations
Vision and knowledge - also love what I do (most of time)

Comments

This was truly a case of being in the right place at the right time.

After working three years as an Assistant Superintendent, my previous employer hired from out of state. The person doing the search told me that they were looking for a man to serve as principal (another vacancy). When I stated that a female could handle the job, he responded by telling me to get the chip off my shoulder and added, "You know what I mean. Someone who is going to be tough." I firmly believe that he led my previous board to believe that they needed a tough personality to deal with things. During the search for a principal one of the male board members commented, "My son says to get a man because the kids just laugh at women." This really was offensive because I had received extensive praise from teachers and parents for the way I was able to work with students in a positive manner.

In my current position, even though I was in my office and working at my desk, a salesman came in and asked for the previous superintendent. When I said that he resigned, he asked me, "Who's your new man?" He simply could not consider a female in that role.

Women are paid less than male administrators.

I have no question that my being female influenced some boards - at least 4, I think. Sometimes it was a concern about finance (I have been very successful with money and referenda, but this didn't matter); once I believe it was because the district was a high school district; in one case a board member actually said "They're not used to women around here. How will you be able to inspire their confidence?" In most cases I felt warmly received, however. The two districts that hired me have been very supportive. I believe in one case my being female caused or exacerbated negative union relations.

By the way, I love the superintendency and encourage other strong women to consider it. You do have to have a thick skin and you have to be able to work with men who have fragile egos in some cases. I still like it.

One other point: When the literature says that women do not play the political games as well as men, I agree. However, I see a time coming when expertise counts for more than smooth talk and baloney.

I was asked by the Board to be the next Superintendent. I never applied. What a way to do it. I have been asked to apply in other district but have not done so.

My situation is unique in that my husband and I are both Superintendents.

I had to accept a position in a district with severe problems. There were few applicants for the position. It is a dual position - Principal/Superintendent. The demands of the job are at times very difficult.

Search firms do not promote women to Boards of Education like they should. It is common knowledge that they often have a "stable of ponies" whom they promote.

More work needs to be done with Boards of Education to understand women's leadership styles.

I thought and debated about whether I wanted to do the superintendency for a long time before entering into the process. I had some particular goals in mind. I wanted to see if I could effectively use my knowledge and experience in an urban district to anticipate and make good decisions in a district that will experience some of the urban challenges, because of demographic and other changes. In the process, I came to define what I wanted, what I had to offer.

I did not seek the superintendent's position, but was asked to take the job. The Board determined that after they did a search, the candidates were not what they were looking to employ. I had been in the District one year.

My view is that the search firms are pretty pro-active in bringing women into the search process. Bottom line, however, is that I sense there is still a hesitancy for local school boards to "take a risk" and hire a woman. My guess is that proportionately, more women get into semi-finals than men, but that more men dominate the finals and the final selection.

I had several mentors who encouraged me, provided me with superintendency experiences before the job became available.

I found many more opportunities for advancement in Illinois since there are numerous small districts. My career path was interrupted for five years while I stayed home to raise my family. The most important skill I need as a superintendent is financial and business expertise. My knowledge of curriculum and instruction helps me be effective with staff.

I'm learning a lot and have been faced with many challenges. We're currently in federal mediation.

Primary problem is difficulty by the board in accepting financial information. I have devised new spreadsheets, developed histories, etc. General acceptance is gradually improving, but it is difficult for farmers to believe we are as well off as we are and improving.

I really think that Boards can tell if you are a "pro-feminist" type person and that is what turns them off toward women. If you just relax and concentrate on the job/interview, everyone on the Board will forget whether you are male or female. I have had two principalships and two superintendencies and have yet to run into barriers going up just because I'm female. Don't get me wrong - I'm not anti-feminist, I just think that sometimes females are their own worst enemies and "create" the barriers they face.

December 29, 1994

Dear Friends,

In February, at the AASA Convention in New Orleans, I will have an opportunity to be on a panel which will share with search groups and organizations different perspectives on their role in superintendent searches. I will address the problems experienced by women and minorities in my presentation. In that regard, it seems to me that to present specific data, rather than merely my perceptions would be more meaningful to those in attendance. Please help me in giving a clear picture of the situation in Illinois, by taking a few minutes in filling out the following questionnaire.

How long have you been a superintendent?	
How many superintendencies have you held?	
Who did the search for the position you have? (Search group, Board, Superintendent, Other)	
What influence did the search group, Board, others have in your selection? (Much, Some, Little, None)	
How many positions did you apply for before being selected for your first superintendency?	
If you are in your second or third superintendency, how many positions did you apply for before being selected for your position?	
How many times have you made the final cut in a search?	
How many times have you made the final cut without being selected?	
How many times have you been interviewed by a search group?	
How many times have you been interviewed by a board of education?	
Are you in a superintendency now, but have tried unsuccessfully to get another superintendency?	
Is your salary commensurate with others in your area of the State?	
Have you been asked by a search group to apply for a position?	
If you were asked by a search group to apply, did you then get an interview?	
What was the greatest factor in getting your present position?	
What was the greatest factor in your not getting a position?	
Did you have to move to get your position(s)? Out of State?	

Were you willing to be mobile in your search?	
Did you move from another State?	
Did you retire from another state before coming to Illinois?	
What personal characteristic is most responsible for your success on the job?	

Please tell a little about yourself.

What is your age?	
At what age did you get your first superintendency?	
What is your highest degree?	
Do you have more than one degree? Please list below..	
How long were you in administration before you got your position?	
What was the position you held directly before you became a superintendent?	
What size is the district you lead?	
Are you married, divorced, widow, single?	
How many children do you have? Ages?	
If married what does your husband do?	

Please add any additional information which may be helpful in the presentation.

Thank you for your time and effort in completing this questionnaire. It is my hope that, perhaps, we can learn from each other and make the way a little easier for those to follow. If you would like results of this survey, please send me your name and address.

Sincerely,

Responses to Questionnaire for Women Superintendents of Illinois

	0-1		2-3		4-5		over 5	
How long have you been a superintendent?	15		12		6		7	
How many superintendencies have you held?	32		8					
	Search Group	& Other	Board	& Other	Supt.	& Other	IASB ISBE	Other
Who did the search for the position you have? (Search group, Board, Superintendent, Other)	16	2	9	3	1	2	6	1
	Much		Some		Little		None	
What influence did the search group, Board, others have in your selection? (Much, Some, Little, None)	23		11		5		1	

	N/A	0	1	2-3	4-5	Over 5
How many positions did you apply for before being selected for your first superintendency?	3	11	6	10	5	5
If you are in your second or third superintendency, how many positions did you apply for before being selected for your position?	33		2	3		2
How many times have you made the final cut in a search?	11		2	17	8	1
How many times have you made the final cut without being selected?	12	7	6	12	2	1
How many times have you been interviewed by a search group?	7	6	11	13		3
How many times have you been interviewed by a board of education?	6	1	7	17	6	3

	Yes	No	
Are you in a superintendency now, but have tried unsuccessfully to get another superintendency?	8	31	
Is your salary commensurate with others in your area of the State?	21	19	
Have you been asked by a search group to apply for a position?	21	19	
If you were asked by a search group to apply, did you then get an interview?	9	5	N/A 7
Did you have to move to get your position(s)?	21	16	
Out of State?	6	15	
Were you willing to be mobile in your search?	31	7	
Out of State?	1	8	
Did you move from another State?	5	33	
Did you retire from another state before coming to Illinois?	2	37	

What was the greatest factor in getting your present position?

	Gender	Lack of Exper.	Other	N/A
What was the greatest factor in your not getting a position?	5	9	7	10

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What personal characteristic is most responsible for your success on the job?

	Under 40	41-44	44-49	Over 50
What is your age?	2	7	20	11
At what age did you get your first superintendency?	5	14	11	5

	Ph.D	Ed.D	M.S.	Ed.S	CAS	Other
What is your highest degree?	16	14	2	6	1	1

	Yes	No
Do you have more than one degree?	33	7

	M.A.	M.S.	Ed.S	B.A.	B.S.	Other
Please list	5	21	3	10	18	10

	0-5	6-10	11-15	Over 15
How long were you in administration before you got your position?	5	20	10	4

	Principal	Asst. Supt.	Director\Asst.	Teacher	Other
What was the position you held directly before you became a superintendent?	12	16	6	1	4

	Under 500	500-700	700-900	Over 1,000
What size is the district you lead?	8	9	4	19

	Married	Divorced	Widow	Single
Are you married, divorced, widow, single?	31	5	2	2

	0-1	2-3	4-5	Over 5
How many children do you have?	15	21	1	3

	Under 15	15-20	21-25	Over 25
Ages?	11	21	19	21

If married, what does your husband do?

__2__ Business Administration
__1__ Professional/Technical
__3__ Retired
__1__ Sales
__10__ School Supt./Education
__3__ Self-Employed
__1__ Tradesman
__10__ Other

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